

Mr Chairman and members of the committee. My name is _____ and

I am here to submit testimony for Lureta Nielsen who is the Project Director in Sheridan County for the Community Incentive Program.

According to Lureta:

The proposed use of restorative justice processes to deal with hate crimes is a proactive and healthy concept. Victims of hate crimes need to be able to address their persecutors in a safe environment. Mediation, family group conferences, sentencing circles, use of victim and community impact statements, restitution programs, constructive community service, victim awareness education, victim empathy programs, school expulsion alternatives, peer mediation, diversion programs, and community panels all provide safe ways for victims to get their needs met. They directly involve the community in the process of caring for the victim while at the same time holding the offender accountable. Forums like these also speak directly to offender needs as well. The offender must recognize that his actions had far reaching impact on a real person. Restorative processes require offenders to take responsibility for the harm they caused and to take the

steps necessary to repair that harm. Restorative processes are not easy. They require a great deal of effort on the part of the offender. Unlike traditional methods of justice which metes out punishment that is "done to the offender," restorative practices require the offender to be an active participant in the process designed to care for the needs of the victim and making reparations. Restorative processes benefit the community in general as well as victims and offenders because all stakeholders have a voice and play a part in repairing harm.